

# HOUSE OF WORTH (French, 1858-1956)

*Jean-Charles Worth* (French 1881-1962)

**EVENING DRESS**, ca. 1931, haute couture  
Ivory and pale brown silk tulle embroidered and fringed with silver glass bugle beads.

I decided to analyze this dress in particular because it is a remarkably crafted and I was interested in what it represents. To fully comprehend what this dress represents, research on the 1920s Flappers was necessary.

“Flappers were a generation of young Western women in the 1920s who wore short skirts, bobbed their hair, listened to jazz, and flaunted their disdain for what was then considered acceptable behavior. Flappers were seen as brash for wearing excessive makeup, drinking, treating sex in a casual manner, smoking, driving automobiles, and otherwise flouting social and sexual norms.”

[Wikipedia]

*“A wild, flighty young woman.”*

*“A woman who refused to fasten her galoshes and the unfastened buckles flapped as she walked.”*

[Smithsonian]

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/the-history-of-the-flapper-part-1-a-call-for-freedom-11957978/#gm7ZiukrhLSe-beW7.99>



I have associated this dress to the 'Flapper' girl style because of how eccentric its appearance is for the 1920-30s and of course, because of the signature style of the fringes.

Being a Flapper girl was about being glamorous and scandalous; and this dress is designed to convey exactly those motifs. The designer, Jean Charles Worth, has created this dress to convey any type of values and attitudes that a typical Flapper girl represented. These women represented power and sexuality, and freedom.

The dress itself is made of densely embroidered silver glass bugle beads that extend into deep layers of fringe and are worked into intricate braids at the shoulders. The glass being used as a material represents femininity due to the delicate nature of the material; it mirrors the beauty and delicacy of the woman wearing it. Femininity is further reinforced from the shape and structure of the hourglass silhouette. As mentioned before, these women were known for their unrestrained sexuality; so the feminine touches to the design of the dress were highly significant. These are the women who managed to break through a traditional society's typical expectations of women. By avoiding the "pure" and "passive" expectations of women, but also keeping their sexuality and femininity, this era of women created a feminist movement which have affected the independence of women around the world even today.

In addition, the use of the glass as a material is extremely effective when it comes to appearance and performance. It is known that Flapper girls danced a lot at parties and outings, letting their fringes glide freely through the air. When moving and dancing, the fringes made of glass probably made a soft tingling sound when they collide. Furthermore, whilst dancing in a party, the lights shining on the dress make a glittery and glossy effect, adding to the glamor that these women represented. This is shown a lot in the previous page's image from the strong light projected on top of the dress in the exhibition.

On the other hand, making a dress out of glass in the first place was ahead of its time, and again, that is what the Flapper generation stood for; independence, eccentricity, unconventionality, and high spirits.

